1992.02 X, Y and JFK

[I wrote this sometime between January 11, 1992, when I wrote to Chomsky that I had not yet seen *JFK*, and February 2, 1992, when I enclosed this review in my letter. It was published three months later in *The Third Decade* May 1992, 8.4, 14-17.[1]]

X, Y and JFK

Contrary to what the critics have been saying, there is far more fact than fiction in Oliver Stone's movie JFK, and its thesis--that the assassination was a coup d'état by the warmongers--is the most credible explanation of the facts, and the lack of them, to date.

It will be good to release the remaining classified documents, as ex-President Ford and the Warren Commission lawyers have now requested, but I doubt that they will add anything to what is already known, namely that the Warren Report is a pack of lies.

If the powers that be are so determined to get at the truth, why don't they just dig up the body, like they did old Zack Taylor last spring? If there isn't a fist-sized hole in the back of Kennedy's skull, the conspiracy theorists will have some explaining to do. This won't happen, though, or if it does, the skull will disappear at the crucial moment, just like the brain did, just like a dozen witnesses did, just like a mountain of other evidence did.

One could almost get nostalgic reading the reviews of JFK, watching all the old lies being dutifully trotted out again by the lapdog corporate press, which hasn't raised a paw to challenge the government's "lone nut" theory of history (extended to the murders of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King) for the past 28 years.

It is 1984+8, we must bear in mind, a difficult age to understand. Our current president, a spook, wages war on a former employee (Noriega) and on the reincarnation of Adolf Hitler (Saddam Hussein), killing tens of thousands but missing the demonic bull's-eye both times, watches while another spook (presumably for the other side), affectionately called Gorbi, ends the Cold War, and now our spook tells us (in his State of the Union address) that we won it, just like we won the Gulf War and yes, by God, the Vietnam War too! What's a Magic Bullet compared to this?

Some of the worst shots at Stone are coming from the left, I'm sorry to say, since I think Marx had some good ideas (unfortunately massively misapplied), though if pressed I will admit more readily to being a Thoreauvian conservative ("For government is an expedient by which men would fain [like to] succeed in letting one another alone"--Civil Disobedience).

In *The Nation* (Jan. 6/13, 1992, p. 7), for example, a magazine I usually agree with, Alexander Cockburn says, perfectly inanely, that "there was no change in policy" regarding Vietnam between the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. This is what the history books say, but the history books also say Oswald shot Kennedy, which makes it the second biggest lie of the century--No. 1 being the Warren Report. The main point of Stone's film is that Kennedy was killed because he had decided to

[1] Archived at https://www.maryferrell.org/showDoc.html?docId=48765#relPageId=16&tab=page.

pull out of Vietnam by the end of 1965, a documented fact (National Security Action Memorandum 263, signed on Oct. 11, 1963) which Cockburn, like his establishment colleagues, stubbornly ignores.

David Corn, another *Nation* columnist who even thinks he knows something about the CIA, weighed in two weeks later with his own diatribe against what he called Stone's "forcing and twisting facts into comic-book format" (*The Nation*, Jan. 27, p. 80), but doesn't name a single fact that Stone got wrong. He correctly recognizes Gen. Y as Edward G. Lansdale, the real-life Ugly American (in Lederer and Burdick's novel of the same name) and Quiet American (in Graham Greene's novel), Dirty Trickster par excellence, maker of US-puppet leaders (Magsaysay in the Phillipines, Diem in South Vietnam), and Kennedy's own choice to head the CIA's Operation Mongoose, but none of this is "twisted" in the film. X says that after Mongoose was officially disbanded, at least part of it was secretly continued and turned on Kennedy himself. This is a theory, but it is not "twisting the facts." What Corn means is that he believes that Lansdale was a "creative and sometimes nutty guy" who had nothing to do with JFK's assassination and that "Mongoose was ended by the Cuban missile crisis in 1962." That is the government line, and could have come direct from the CIA public relations office. If Corn wants to swallow it, that's his problem.

There is a picture in Jim Garrison's book (*On the Trail of the Assassins*, NY: Sheridan Square Press, 1988) of the three so-called tramps (one obscured), two so-called policemen, and a sixth man, walking away from the camera. None of these people, incredibly, have ever been identified, the most logical explanation for which is that Garrison is right and they are all government agents. Some claim the sixth man is Lansdale. Corn would call this "twisting the facts" too, probably. But what "facts"? They disappeared. What do you call that, and the thousand other flagrant examples of non-investigation (to put it mildly) in this case? I call it a coverup. We are not only entitled to speculate; we have no other choice.

X, Corn may like to know, in real life is Col. L. Fletcher Prouty, US Air Force, retired, who knows a hell of a lot more about the CIA and Lansdale (who died a few years ago) than he does. Those of us who know Prouty and his work have no trouble recognizing either him or Lansdale, whom he worked with on many occasions during his nine years at the Pentagon as liaison officer to the CIA (1955-64). Prouty's 1973 book *The Secret Team: The CIA and Its Allies in Control of the United States and the World* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall) is even more relevant and insightful today than it was two decades ago. Everything that X says in the film Prouty has said elsewhere, in numerous articles and interviews, and he is widely quoted in intelligence and assassination literature. He wrote the appendix to Robert Groden and Harrison Livingstone's *High Treason* (Baltimore: Conservatory Press, 1989) and the introduction to Mark Lane's *Plausible Denial* (NY: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991). Strangely--or not so strangely--his second book has been ready and waiting for years, but he hasn't found a publisher with guts enough to put it out. Maybe the Stone film will change that.

I feel a strong affinity with Stone. He went to Vietnam, and I spent the war years in college and graduate school dodging the draft and hating the politicians who wanted me to go too. I especially hated their intellectual henchmen, like McGeorge Bundy and Rostow and Kissinger, who were supposed to represent reason but exuded only madness and destruction. The national security of the United States at stake in Vietnam? If that was joke, no one was laughing. If not, what was it? A "tragic error," the historical engineers tell us now, a well-intentioned mistake. But one thing I could never understand: How could they could have been so stupid? They came from Harvard and MIT (and, as I didn't realize at the time, CIA), and I couldn't even get into Harvard. I knew I wasn't smarter than they were. It was coming to grips with the assassination that answered this question for me. They weren't stupid, they were lying--maybe to themselves as well as to us, but they were lying.

That realization had the same effect on me as it did on Stone, from what I've read. The catalyst for him was reading Garrison's book in 1988. For me it was a British TV documentary called "The Men Who Killed Kennedy," produced by Nigel Turner, which was broadcast in October of the same year in England and subsequently in 30 other countries--but not in the United States until three years later (in Sept. 1991 on the A & E cable network). I saw it in November 1988 in Germany, where I live. I had never even been curious about the assassination, never read a single book about it, never heard the words "coup d'état" in connection with it before, but that film hit me like a freight train. It didn't mention Vietnam, but later, when I read in the assassination literature about Kennedy's withdrawal decision, my mind caught up with my gut. I knew what had hit me: the truth.

Prouty appears toward the end of the Turner film--a big, square-jawed, athletic-looking man with that steely glint in his eyes that earnest military men seem to acquire as an accoutrement to their uniform. My father and brother went to West Point, one uncle to Annapolis and another to the Coast Guard Academy, and I spent my childhood on Army posts, so I know what I'm talking about, and I suppose that also has something to do with the impression Prouty made on me: I know the type. I don't trust them or distrust them, but I can listen to them. Prouty struck me as honest, reasonable and courageous then, and that impression didn't change when I met him or during the two and a half years we have been corresponding. I wrote a nine-page review of the Turner film, quoting Prouty at length, because I felt his statement said it all. I still do:

> I think without any question it's what we called the use of hired gunmen. And this isn't new. In fact, this little manual here, which is called "the assassination manual for Latin America" [Clandestine Operations Manual for Central America], says that, talking about Latin America, "if possible, professional criminals will be hired to carry out specific, selective 'jobs'--"jobs" in quotes, which means murders. Well, if this manual for Latin America, printed within the last few years, and a government manual, says that, there's no question but that the application of the same techniques was dated back in Kennedy's time--in fact I know that from my own experience. You know, I was in that business in those days. So, with that knowledge, you begin to realize that hired criminals, the way this book says, can be hired by anybody in power with sufficient money to pay them, but, more importantly, with sufficient power to operate the coverup ever after.
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> Because you see it's one thing to kill somebody; it's another thing to cover up the fact that you did it, or that you hired someone to do it. That's more difficult. So they used the device of the Warren Commission to cover up their hired killers. Now, who would hire the killers? And who has the power to put that Warren Commission report out over the top of the whole story? You see, you're dealing with a very high echelon of power. It doesn't necessarily reside in any government. It doesn't necessarily reside in any single corporate institution. But it seems to reside in a blend of the two. Otherwise, how could you have gotten people like the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to participate in the coverup, the police in Dallas to participate in the coverup, etc.--and the media, all the media, not just one or two newspapers, but none of them will print the story that anybody other than Oswald killed the President with three bullets--something that's absolutely untrue.

I wasn't able to get my review published, but I sent copies to a number of people, including Stone, and now that I see the role that Prouty plays in JFK (he is not mentioned in Garrison's book), I like to think I had something to do with getting Stone and Prouty together. In any case, we're all in the same foxhole now.

Garrison, Prouty, and Stone are courageous men, and *JFK*, I hope, will prove to be a great public service. I am suspicious of Time Warner's motives for producing the film, however. After all, Time-Life is the company that kept the Zapruder film locked away from public view for 12 years, and is hardly a bastion of dissent. So far, with the press feverishly toeing the "Get Stone" line, the impact seems negligible, if not negative. What if JFK turns out to be the assassination film to end all assassination films--and inquiry? What will we do when all the commotion dies down? Forget it? Back to business as usual? You can't say it any louder than Stone has said it, and if that doesn't do it, what will? A lot of people will be asking themselves that question.

On the other hand, the film speaks for a lot of people. According to a recent Time/CNN poll, 68% of the 73% of Americans who thought the assassination was a conspiracy (i.e. 49.6% of all Americans) said the CIA or the US military may have been involved (Time, Jan. 13, 1992, European edition, p. 40). That's 125 million Americans who think Stone may be right! Maybe that's the half that doesn't bother to vote. Certainly it is the half whose opinions are not reflected in the "responsible" press, since all of our "opinion leaders" are too propagandized to even think such thoughts, much less express them.

But what if some of those 125 million people get tired of just being cynical, and get mad? What about the vets--the victims--whose fates were sealed with Kennedy's? The Vietnam War gave 570 billion tax dollars (accounting for inflation) to the warmongers. What will the 24.5 million Americans now on food stamps think of that? We saw it once, in 1968, when Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were on the verge of forming a people's coalition that would have shaken the teeth out of the power elite. That's why they were killed. The revolution was decapitated. (Both murders, like that of the president, were conspiracies, despite Received Opinion to the contrary.) It could happen again.